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## PARENT BENCHMARK NIGHTS

### Lincoln Elementary School

### Wichita, Kansas

Lincoln Elementary School staff supported the decision that increasing family and community involvement would help improve students' achievement. They planned eight Parent Benchmark Nights for second-grade families to enhance parent knowledge of the benchmark assessments and increase the number of students who pass the assessments.

A teacher wrote a grant to the Downtown Optimist Club to fund the project. The club is a member of Optimist, International, which is a service club similar to the Rotary Club or the Lions Club. They raise money for youth-related activities. The Downtown Optimist Club partnered with Lincoln Elementary because of its urban setting, and donated about \$600 to cover the costs of materials, food, and incentives for the Benchmark Nights.

Each Benchmark Night targeted specific standards of reading, math, or writing. Parents and children received portfolios that included a reading test, a writing prompt and samples of students' writing, and a math test with problem solving. The portfolios helped parents learn what their children are asked to do on the assessments. Participants engaged in educational activities during the evening. Parents also received handouts on the activities presented such as reading a story and identifying the characters, setting, problem, and solution. Students participated in Benchmark Nights by helping their parents make and use the activities and explaining to their parents what they were learning in class.

Approximately sixteen to twenty families attended each of the eight Benchmark Nights—about 50% of second-grade families. Student assessment scores improved from the previous year after Parent Benchmark nights were conducted. Almost all students (91%) passed the reading, writing, and math assessments. In addition, all parents gained information about the district assessments and what their children were learning at school.

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